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V CORPS AVIATION TROOPS GET RARE CHANCE TO DISCUSS SOLDIER ISSUES WITH SENIOR WASHINGTON OFFICIALS

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HEIDELBERG, Germany — Soldiers from V Corps' 11th Aviation Regiment had a rare opportunity to discuss their needs with members of the appropriations committee of the U.S. House of Representatives when the legislators and other senior officials visited Ramstein Air Base, Germany August 27.



SPC KRISTOPHER JOSEPH
Representative David Hobson (R-Ohio), a member of the appropriations committee of the U.S. House of Representative,s visits with Sgt. 1st Class Trevor Swaby (left) and Spc. Eduardo Duran of V Corps' 11th Aviation Regiment during a luncheon Aug. 26 at Ramstein Air Base, Germany that allowed several committee members an opportunity to talk with the troops about logistical realities in the Army.

The committee members came to Europe to attend a groundbreaking ceremony for a D-Day interpretive history center in Normandy, France, but also wanted to meet with V Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, 11th Aviation Commander Col. George Bilafer and some of the 11th's troops to get a "boots on the ground" point of view about refurbishing helicopters returning from Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

The group was headed by Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), the ranking member of the committee's defense subcommittee. Murtha was accompanied by subcommittee

member Rep. David Hobson (R-Ohio); Powell Moore, assistant secretary of defense for legislative affairs, and Stan Moskowitz, the CIA director of congressional affairs.

To the Soldiers' surprise, the committee members wanted to discuss much more than aviation.

"Since most of us were in Iraq, they wanted to know how all of our equipment was doing," said Spc. Eduardo Duran of the 11th. "Everything from our weapons, flak vests, billeting, and even our boots -- you could they were taking full interest in us."

"They showed us that there is concern in Washington for the Soldiers," said the 11th's Staff Sgt. Peter Perella. "After talking with them, it seems like they will take our ideas back to Congress and make some changes."

Bilafer was equally pleased at the opportunity for his Soldiers to bring their views to the committee members.

"This is great for the troops to meet these people and see that their government cares about them and appreciates what they're doing for their country," the colonel said. "The (committee) members were glad to get the Soldiers' point of view because when they get the ground truth they can go back to Washington and say, 'I talked to the Soldiers, and I know what they want.'"

